

Issues related to Women's employment in informal areas in Durrës

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Introduction

The area of "Former-Marshes" in Durrës still remains one of the most problematic areas of the city. Among other problems related to this area, the women's employment is also a very concerning problem and almost not solved at all due to a lot of reasons such as: lack of information, education, and necessary qualifications, lack of available jobs, social isolation, the family's mentality, lack of elderly and small children's care service etc.

Disconnected from their former residence (well-structured cities or towns) and with different mentalities, these people found themselves in front of the unknown, instability and anonymity.

The geographical composition of the newcomers is diversified but those that come from the north of Albania, forced by the difficulties of the living conditions, lack of fields, unemployment, poverty and climatic conditions, constitute the greatest number of them.

The newcomers are mainly from cities such as: Bulqizë, Mirditë, Pukë, Kukës, Tropojë, Gramsh, Peshkopi, Dibër e Malësi e Madhe, etc.

The "former-marshes" area started to be populated in 1992, and in 1996 in the 400 acres area there were around 170 families. However, today this area has a large size and the number of residents has increased significantly (about 40 000 residents) and there are 7000 families.

The Survey's Objective

The main objective of this survey is to give a general theoretical model of women's employment problems in the "forer-marshes" area in Durres.

The situation of women in Albania in the last twenty years has carried with it a lot of distressing problems and new phenomena that have been and still are shocking for the Albanian reality.

Efforts and proposals for action in all the priority sectors for women's employment of this area of Durres have been conditioned by the range of economical, social and political activation of women, as an issues of special importance.

The main hypothesis of this survey is:

"Issues of women employment and their relation to the social problems in the "forer-marshes" area in Durres."

Methodology

For the realization of this survey, a special instrument has been drawn. Though this instrument we aim the collection of the necessary information for the fulfillment of the general goal and the authentication of the hypothesis.

The first step is the filing and familiarity with the literature. Previous studies on the employment of women were also reviewed. The majority of them deal with the relation between the gender differences and social problems related to them such as : employment, education, equity in decisionmaking, health care, etc.It was also observed that a great deal of these variables were also valid for Albania, and it served as a comparison ground for this survey.

The methods used in the review of the issues treated is the theoretica method. The data was collected from the previous surveys literature on this issue as well as other documents that deal with the marginalized problems

related to women's employment and the direct observation of these problems in the area and contacts with locals.

Literature Review

In this chapter we have presented the contribution in the key concepts according to different authors. Employment is related to gender, and other social problems such as education (but not only). That is why it is important to explain gender and other problems related to it.

Understanding "Gender"

Are the changes in behaviour of the men and women a result of their biological changes or do they depend on different socio-cultural changes? A lot of authors think that the inner biological changes establish the changes in behaviour of men and women. They rely on sociological arguments and defend the idea that in almost all cultures: men are more aggressive whereas women are more passive; men are less sensitive whereas women are more empathetic. Other authors are not affected by the above mentioned arguments. The level of aggression of men, according to them, differentiates a lot among different cultures (Elshtain, 1987).¹

In a lot of cultures women and their biological composition are considered responsible for the subject status of women in the society. As far as men are concerned, it is believed that characteristics, roles and the different states of men and women in the society are established by the biology, they are natural and as a result they are unchanged (Bhasin, 2000).²

¹ Elshtain, J. B. (1987). *Women and War*. New York: Basic Books.

² Bhasin, K. (2000) *Understanding Gender*, New Delhi: Kali Primaries.

Social problems identified in the “former-marshes” area

In the observations and discussions with representatives of non-governmental organizations that operate in the “former-marshes areas” and organizations that are focused gender, education and employment problems, some of the most problematic issues were identified. Among the main ones, which have been included in the survey are: the application of the Kanun in this area only for women, matchmaking marriages, male supremacy over females, lack of information on gynecology diseases and family planning, uncertainty on marriage rape concepts and sexual abuse, the tradition of acceptance and lack of reaction, the high level of unemployment and economical dependence of women, violence or gender inequality, the population's composition, religious beliefs, house holding and family, the economical activity, women's participation, the property rights, women's education in the “former-marshes” area and their dangerousness in human beings trafficking.

Employment and gender

The devision of work and establishment of the adults' status in a lot od societies is done on gender grounds (Nielson, 1978)³, but only a few statuses such as that of the mother and father are directly related to gender. However, the mother and father's status has paid an important role in the creation of gender inequality throughout history (Huber, 1976).⁴

In the early society of hunters and food collectors, mothers had a lot of duties. Dependance and care of childen were their responsability and this forced women to remain on the same place for a lot of time. Though women partecipated in hunting, men were hunters that used to go ways from their residential areas for a lot of days. Some anthropologists discuss on the idea that

³ Nielson, J. (1978). *Sex in society: Perspectives on stratification*. Bel-mont, CA: Wadsworth.

⁴ Huber, J., & Spitze,G. (1983). *Sex Stratification: Children, housework and jobs*. New York: Academic Press.

since hunting constituted the main source of food in these societies, biological roles allowed men to monopolise the most culturally-appreciated social roles (Friedl, 1975).⁵

As far as the Albanian employment market after the 90s of the 20th century is concerned, we can say that it has been accompanied by low levels of women employment, being a general characteristic of countries in transition. Before the 90s of the 20th century, men and women were more or less equally integrated in the work market. As far as the 1985 figures demonstrate, the level of women participation in the work market is almost equal to that of men (Ekonomi et al, 1999: 60). However, the participation of women dropped in the following years.

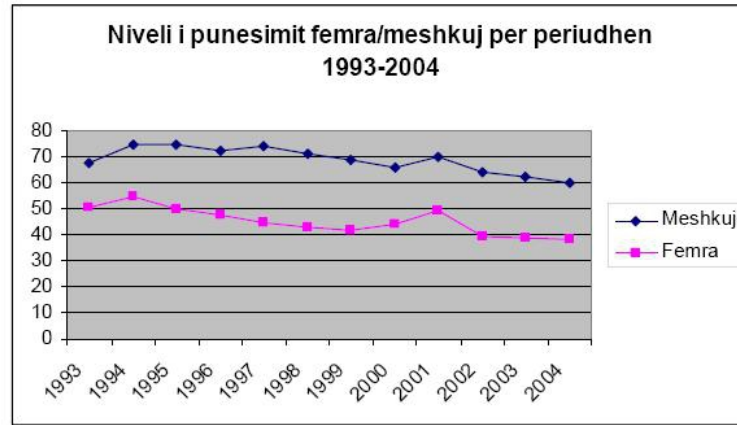
Different authors think that the participation of women in the work market constitutes one of the main indicators of women empowerment. However, the up-to-date data demonstrates that there is inequality between men and women in respect to the work market.

According to INSTAT in 1989 the employment level was 85% for women and 94% for men, whereas after 1990 it fell down to 50-60% for both. It is clearly demonstrated in the following chart.

In 2004 the employment level was 38.3% for women and 60.1% for men. There is a slight increase in the level of women employment in 2005 in 38.8% in front of the 60% of men employment.

⁵ Friedl, E. (1975). *Men and women: An anthropologist's view*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Chart 1. The level of men and women employment in the period between 1993 and 2004



Burimi: INSTAT, Tregu i Punes 2004, INSTAT, Vjetari Statistikor 1993-2001,

When we want to analyse the women and men state related to the work market we can not only rely on the employment and unemployment indicators. Eventhough they are very important indicators, they should be accompanied by the level of participation level indicators in the work forces which formulates the relationship between the number of economically active population and the total number of people in the corresponding working age. This shows what percentage of those women that are in working age take part in the working force, that means that they are employed or unemployed.⁶

At mean time, a gender differentiation in payment is also observed. Consequently, according to CEDAW ⁷, men as well as women, have the right for: equal payment (including rewards); equal treatment for a job with the same value and equal treatment related to work quality assessment.

According to INSTAT (1998), in the survey on the Living Conditions of the Family, the average salaries of women in all divisions and levels, represented 70% of the men salaries as a result of lower positions of men in the hierarchical

⁶ Males and females, 2005-INSTAT

⁷ Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination towards women, part 3, Act 1

structures.⁸ Eventhough according to the Albanian legislation all individuals are equally paid for the same work done, still there are gender differences in salaries especially in the private sector. As far as the public sector is concerned, this difference is related to the fact that women and girls are usually employed in the health and education sector (in which the level of salaries is lower),as well as in the level of specialists or officials, whereas men are usually in managment or decision-making positions,etc where the level of salaries is higher.

Results

The results of this survey will be discussed in details throughout this chapter in the form of data collected by the observations and are grouped according to the survey's main goal .

1. Demographic data

In the first part of the survey, demographic data of the observed population is presented. We can find here information about their age, education, time of arrival in the area, marital status, religion, etc.

Age

The majority of women are between 46-55 years old, whereas there is a smaller percentage of them between 26-35 and 56-65.

Marital Status

Almost 80% of women are part of a civil marriage whereas a small part of women declares non-civil marriage.

Educational Level

Only a few women have managed to finish a high school. However, there is a tendency of women to finish at least the obligatory level that corresponds to

⁸ INSTAT, Survey on Life Conditions, October 1998. This figure is related to the fact that women have lower positions at work than men, but there is no payment difference for the same position.

the ninth grade. Higher education is still regarded as a tabu as far as women in this area are concerned.

The number of family members

The number of family members varies from 5 to 7 people.

Religion

People involved in this survey are mainly muslims. More than 80% of the women are muslims. As a result, we can say that the majority are of this religion.

2. Employment and income

In this part it is required to collect information on the employment of individuals and their personal and family monthly income.

Most of the women are housewives and home care. However, a small portion of them have found different alternatives of employment in an individual way. The rest of them, works in the private and public department.

Monthly personal income

In this area the dominant part of women, have no monthly income. Thus they declare they have no personal source of income as a result of the high level of unemployment in their ranks.

3. General Issues

Demographic movements to urban areas are associated with various problems.

The issue which is considered most troubling for women, inhabitants of this area is unemployment of own person talking.

The second problem concerned about women's unemployment spouse. Another issue of concern ,results also family violence.

The other problem which is considered more worrisome from a considerable part of the former inhabitants of the swamp is the failure of family planning. They are in many cases in the reproductive role and are not active in making decisions in the family.

The inability to be involved in decision making within or outside the family, ranks sixth in terms of problems of concern to residents of this community. Difficulties to integrate due to the change of cultural norms, are considered as very disturbing.

As the ninth issue in relation to the degree of discomfort experienced by residents of the former swamp area, ranks the oppressive impact of Canon norms.

Arranged marriages are considered as the less worrisome issue for residents of this area.

What do you think that should you do to improve your life?

The majority of the females assert that the improvement of the life of women in this area, firstly, should be made by expanding new jobs. Some of the given responses suggest the opening of professional training centers, a higher qualification job from women's organizations, more education degree, more work in genitive integration, the achievement of genitive equality and amortization of genitive prejudgments , the development of the roads, the disposition of sanitations, the improvement of the infrastructure and then the creation of amusing environments, the increase of more medical and social centers.

The discussion

The study displayed the problematic that associate the demographic movements and the mentalities of the stereotypes that exist in people's minds. The urbanization process, usually, tends to involve uniform models of social life. Although, in the behaviors and thinking manners of the individuals, there are determined distinctions which belong to the gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion, subculture etc. The employment of the women is a determinant factor in the society. According to the theoretical information and the observations and different conversations, it is evidenced the difference among males and females

regarding to the labor market. The last ones seem to be more discriminated for this issue. The study in this zone also seems to reinforce the established genitive stereotype, where the female must care about the family, meanwhile the male has to provide incomes and for this has more opportunities to go ahead. This is expressed clearly where the majority of the women are unemployed. It is to be estimated the fact that a part of them have found as a solution the self – employment. Here, we can speak about a tendency that is developing, which seems that recently, is present in the rows of the female gender. The standard of employment of the women appears as a determinative factor for the personal and family incomes. So, the greater the number of employed people, the higher will their monthly income be.

Recommendations

From the results of the study can be demonstrated in a summarized way these main recommendations:

1. To be developed more studies of this nature or maybe wider regarding to the population of this zone. Studies of this nature influence on the realization of the individuals in relation with the existence of different problematic.
2. The enunciated problematic , which weren't quite unknown before can constitute as an informative source for governmental and nongovernmental organizations which have their central focus on the zone of ex /bog , or also for the organizations that have a general developmental character. The information of this study can serve as a motive for the regeneration of the ideas, for the solutions of these problematic from corresponding organisms and notably as it belongs to the problem of the employment of women.

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¹ “Gender Analysis of Elementary School Texts” – edition of “Aleanca Gjinore për Zhvillim” center, Pegi 2005, pg. 6.